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*“The future of this nation depends on the Christian training of our youth.”*  
*George Washington*

**AACS National Bible, Fine Arts, and Academic Competition Report**

Last week, the 45th AACS National Competition was held in Greenville, SC. Approximately 1700 students and sponsors from 191 schools representing 32 states competed in 76 different categories in Bible, art, music, speech, and academics. Throughout the week, students heard special chapel messages from Rand Hummel of the WILDS Christian Camp challenging students to live biblically and on the importance of reading Scripture and from BJU President Steve Pettit on biblical leadership. Bob Jones University faculty, staff, and students graciously facilitated the annual student competition and provided activities and accommodations for the event. The three-day competition culminated Thursday night with an [awards ceremony](#), which included a showcase highlighting some of the best entries by several individuals and schools. The AACS Cup of Excellence was awarded to the state that accumulated the highest point total, going to Virginia this year, with Tennessee and New Jersey in second and third place respectively. The top three states were within just three points of each other, an evidence of the high level of talent and skill the students brought to the competition. The AACS offers our warmest congratulations to all the students who participated and made this year’s National Competition a memorable event. To view the complete list of this year’s winners, click [here](#). For pictures and information from the event, please visit our Facebook page [here](#).

**Federal Judge Approves Settlement Protecting Religious Liberty in School Choice**

A federal judge has [approved a settlement](#) between some Vermont families and several public school districts which participate in a school choice program. The tuitioning program, dating back to 1869, allows tuition funds for students in rural towns with no public schools to be used at any private school the parents choose, whether in or out of state. In this particular case, the state withheld school choice funds from some families because of the religious nature of the schools the parents chose. The school districts claimed that a 1999 ruling by the Vermont Supreme Court prohibited funds from being used at sectarian schools. However, in 2022, the U.S. Supreme Court [ruled in Carson v. Makin](#) that a similar town tuitioning program in Maine could not exclude religious schools “from an otherwise generally available public benefit because of their religious exercise.” Despite the clear ruling from the Supreme Court that religious schools cannot be discriminated against solely because of their religious nature, Maine reacted by [passing a law](#) that narrows the religious exemption in their Human Rights Law so that Christian schools cannot participate in the program if they uphold a biblical view of human sexuality. The state of [Vermont](#) has been considering similar legislation to discriminate against religious schools in its school choice program. However, the [court-approved settlement](#) between the districts in Vermont and Vermont families provides a good indication that such religious discrimination would be considered unconstitutional in violation of the First Amendment. Per the settlement, the Vermont school districts will be reimbursing the families that were denied the tuition benefits based on the religious nature of their school choice. A [lawsuit](#) has also been filed in Maine by Crosspoint Church and Bangor Christian Schools, challenging the state’s new law as unconstitutional.

## **FBI Director Subpoenaed for Memo Regarding Churches**

On Monday, April 10, Rep. Jim Jordan (OH) sent FBI Director Wray a letter informing him that he was being subpoenaed for all documents regarding a memo released in January detailing plans for the FBI to infiltrate Catholic parishes, which at least one undercover agent has already done. The [purpose of this infiltration](#) was to “make congregations aware of radicalization signs, and enroll the assistance of the congregations to report on suspicious activity.” The proposal also indicated plans for FBI agents to “develop sources among the clergy and church leadership.” Although the FBI ultimately decided not to implement the plan to infiltrate houses of worship, the subpoena was sent so that the House Select Subcommittee on Weaponization could review all information regarding the memo, including plans for how FBI infiltration would have occurred. The subcommittee had [previously requested information](#) about the memo in February and March, but Director Wray did not respond to the first request and then gave 18 pages of heavily redacted material. In response to this memo, Rep. Jordan indicated that the subcommittee could seek [legislative reforms](#) “to compel employees of the Justice Department to educate themselves about First Amendment protections of religious liberty.” Rep. Jordan mentioned that cooperation of the FBI and Director Wray is essential to preventing future abuses of houses of worship. Director Wray has not yet commented on the subpoena, but he [has condemned](#) the memo, stating that he was “aghast” when he learned of it and “took steps to immediately withdraw it.” He further stated, “It does not reflect FBI standards. We do not conduct investigations based on religious affiliation or practices, full stop.”

## **Federal Court Rules Against Abortion Bill**

On April 12, the U.S. Court Appeals for the 5th Circuit ruled that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) had to restore safeguards to chemical abortion drugs that had been removed in 2016. In 2000, the FDA allowed the abortion drug mifepristone to be fast-tracked through the evaluation process, calling pregnancy a life-threatening illness. The fast-tracked approval came with [several safety restrictions](#): “dispensing could only be done by licensed physicians; three in-person physician visits were required . . . and physicians had to report all medical complications.” However, in 2016, the FDA removed those safety measures, requiring only one in-person visit, any health care worker could administer the drug, and doctors were no longer required to report medical complications. In November 2022, [Alliance Defending Freedom](#) (ADF) filed a lawsuit against the FDA challenging its approval of the abortion drug. In early April of 2023, a federal district court ordered that the FDA restore the safeguards for mifepristone. The 5th Circuit Court of Appeals then agreed with the district court, ordering the FDA to restore the safeguards while the lawsuit is ongoing. While the safeguards must be put in place, mifepristone will still be available for use during the lawsuit. In addition to killing a baby, chemical abortions pose significant health risks for the mother. These [health risks](#) include infertility, substantial bleeding, and infection, among many others. The [Department of Justice](#) has stated its plans to fight the 5th Circuit Court’s ruling at the Supreme Court, and ADF has also [filed a brief](#) with the Supreme Court to urge the court to uphold the ruling by the 5th Circuit.

## **In Case You Missed It:**

[Weekly Market Update](#) provided by Jeff Beach of the [AACS Investment Team at Merrill Lynch](#)

[Practical Legal Help for Christian Schools: ADF Ministry Alliance](#)

[Promise to America’s Children](#)

[ADF Video: Respect for Marriage Act: What Church and Ministry Leaders Should Know](#)

[AACS Executive Director Jeff Walton Weighs in on School Security after Tennessee Tragedy](#)